

FARMINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

POLICY AND PROCEDURE



Policy Number:

241-04

Effective Date:

04/26/2017

Subject:

Responding to Calls for Service

Approved by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S.D. Hebbe".

Steven D. Hebbe, Chief of Police



PURPOSE:

To establish standards governing the operation of police vehicles while responding to calls for service.

POLICY:

It is the policy of the Farmington Police Department to establish guidelines to provide for safe and timely responses to calls for service based upon the urgency of the call.

PROCEDURE:

This policy is designed to establish procedures to guide officers in determining appropriate levels of response through classification of calls for service by designation of the seriousness of the call. Officers responding to calls for service are to operate police vehicles in strict compliance with New Mexico State Statutes and the following guidelines and procedures. Officers will operate police vehicles with due regard for the safety of all persons and will be held accountable for the consequences of any reckless disregard for the safety of others.

New Mexico State Statutes 66-7-6: Authorized Emergency Vehicles:

Section 66-7-6 of the Motor Vehicle Code regulates the operation of authorized emergency vehicles and provides exemptions from certain traffic laws to those operators. The section states:

The driver of an authorized emergency vehicle, when responding to an emergency call or when in pursuit of an actual or suspected violator of the law or when responding to but not upon returning from a fire alarm, may exercise the privileges set forth in this section subject to the conditions stated. The Chief of the New Mexico State Police or the appropriate local agency may designate emergency vehicles and revoke the designation. When vehicles are so designated, they are authorized emergency vehicles.

The driver of an authorized emergency vehicle may:

1. Park or stand, irrespective of provisions of the Motor Vehicle Code [Articles 1 to 8 of Chapter 66, except 66-7-102.1 NMSA 1978];

2. Proceed past a red or stop signal or stop sign, but only after slowing down as necessary for safe operation;
3. Exceed the maximum speed limits so long as he does not endanger life or property; and
4. Disregard regulations governing direction of movement or turning in specified directions.

The exemptions granted to an authorized emergency vehicle apply only when the driver of the vehicle, while in motion, sounds an audible signal by bell, siren or exhaust whistle as reasonably necessary and when the vehicle is equipped with at least one lighted lamp displaying a red light visible under normal atmospheric conditions from a distance of five hundred feet to the front of the vehicle, except that an authorized emergency vehicle operated as a police vehicle need not be equipped with or display a red light visible from in front of the vehicle.

This section does not relieve the driver of an authorized emergency vehicle from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons nor does it protect the driver from the consequences of his reckless disregard for the safety of others.

All departmental patrol vehicles which are equipped with emergency lights and siren are in compliance with the definition of an authorized emergency vehicle and are designated as such.

Call Classification and Response Guidelines:

For the purposes of regulating response procedures, officers shall, based upon the best information available to the officer at the time of the call, determine if the nature of the call constitutes a Non-Emergency, In-Progress, or Emergency call for service. Officers will use the following guidelines to determine the classification of the call and the appropriate response procedures, based on the information available:

Non-Emergency Call Response:

Calls for service of a non-emergency nature where a quick response is not essential. Officers follow normal operating conditions by driving in a safe and courteous manner, adhering to all traffic laws. These types of calls may include, but are not limited to: Non-Injury Crashes, Transports, Calls not in progress, Speak to Officer.

In-Progress Call Response:

During an in-progress situation (where significant loss of property is likely to occur and personal injury is possible but not likely) officers should drive in a safe and courteous manner and adhere to all traffic laws whenever feasible. Officers may choose, based upon the individual, articulable merits of the incident, to expedite their response in accordance with the privileges set forth in section 66-7-6 of the Motor Vehicle Code. (These types of situations may include, but are not limited to: Hold up alarms; In-Progress incidents involving significant crimes against property (Burglary, Arson); or other in-progress crimes of a serious nature, in addition to other types of disaster, whether man-made or natural in origin.) If the officer deems the call for service to require an expedited response, the Officer shall activate emergency lights and siren whenever necessary to allow the officer to comply with statutory exemptions regarding proceeding past a red or stop signal or stop sign, exceeding the maximum speed limits and disregarding regulations governing direction of movement or turning. This allows an officer

to safely maneuver through heavy traffic and proceed through controlled intersections to reduce any delay in response.

Emergency Call Response:

Any life threatening situations (including man-made or natural disaster), reported use of weapons, multiple assailants to victim ratio, motor vehicle accidents with injury, (When responding to a report of a motor vehicle accident with injuries, the officer should use discretion as to the type of injuries and whether the injuries are serious in nature. Accidents with injuries known to be minor, such as complaint of minor muscle or joint pain, may not require an emergency response.), officer's request for immediate backup, hazmat situations, or when a person's safety is immediately jeopardized. Officers will respond as quickly and safely as possible, utilizing emergency lights and siren as is reasonably necessary (see section 6 of the following emergency response procedures). Officers operate within the statutory limitations while exercising the privileges set forth in section 66-7-6 of the Motor Vehicle Code regarding exemptions to certain laws.

Emergency Response Procedures:

When responding to urgent or emergency calls for service, officers adhere to the following procedures:

1. Officers will not operate their vehicle at a speed, or in any manner, that may cause loss of control;
2. Officers pass to the left of other vehicles traveling in the same direction if possible;
3. Officers slow or come to a complete stop to ensure safe passage through controlled intersections, particularly when proceeding against a red or stop signal or stop sign;
4. Officers will not make sudden turns across moving traffic, U-turns or other changes of direction without ensuring that such movement can be made safely;
5. Officers at all times remain cognizant of the safety of themselves and the general public;
6. Certain circumstances warrant increased caution when nearing the scene of an incident. Potential Hostage Situations, "Active Shooter", Armed Robberies still in-progress, and other similar situations may be exacerbated by the suspect(s) becoming alerted, by virtue of the visual and audible warning signals of the emergency response, to the imminent arrival of responding police officers. In such circumstances, officers may choose to terminate the audible and visual emergency warning equipment upon reaching the area where the use of such equipment may constitute an undue increased threat to innocent victims and persons involved in the incident. When so doing, officers shall use increased caution in their response, weighing the need for the expedited response against the hazards presented to other vehicles, pedestrians, and un-involved persons. Officers may choose to resume normal driving methods and speeds when the risk of the continued emergency response outweighs the inherent risks faced by persons involved in the incident.
7. If, in the course of an emergency response, an officer receives additional information that tends to significantly lessen the degree of the emergency or negates a continued emergency response, the officer shall de-activate his or her emergency equipment and return to normal, law-abiding driving

procedures. *For example, while responding to a vehicle accident with injuries, and emergency medical personnel arrive prior to the responding officer, the expedited response may no longer be necessary (the officer may consider environmental conditions, traffic hazards, and other circumstances in addition to the availability of emergency medical care).*